

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 IO-10 /089 W

----- 117671

R 101450Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4826

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY SANAA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 6882

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS ET

SUBJECT: CONFLICT WITH THE AFAR; BITS AND PIECES

REFS: (A) ADDIS 6725 AND PREVIOUS; (B) USDAO 0441 JUN 75

1. WE HAVE FEW HARD FACTS ON THE CLASHES WHICH HAVE TAKEN PLACE AND ARE APPARENTLY CONTINUING BETWEEN ETHIOPIAN REGULARS AND AFAR TRIBESMEN SINCE THE FIRST DAYS OF THIS MONTH. THERE FOLLOWS THE SUBSTANCE OF INFORMATION CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO US.

A) ACCORDING TO SOME, THE BRIDGE AT KILOMETER 661 ON THE ASSAB ROAD, WHICH THE AFAR BLEW AT THE OUTSET OF THE CURRENT CONFLICT, HAS BEEN SUFFICIENTLY REPAIRED TO PERMIT THE PASSAGE OF TANKER TRUCKS. (OTHER SOURCES DENY IT: CF REF B) A HUGE CONVOY OF SUCH TANKERS IS SAID TO BE ENROUTE BACK TO ADDIS ABABA TO REPLENISH THE CAPITAL'S FUEL SUPPLIES, WHICH WERE ALL BUT EX-HAUSTED OVER THE JUNE 6-7 WEEKEND. WE SHALL SEE.

B) THE TALK AROUND ADDIS HAS IT THAT SOME 300 ETHIOPIAN
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SOLDIERS HAVE ALREADY BECOME CASUALTIES OF THIS FIGHTING. WE

THINK THIS FIGURE IS VERY HIGH AND GIVE IT LITTLE CREDENCE. WE NOTE THAT AN AP ITEM, ALLEGEDLY BROADCAST OVER THE ARMED FORCES RADIO AND TV SERVICE (AFRTS), ASSERTS THAT CASUALTIES IN THAT NUMBER HAVE BEEN INCURRED IN THIS FIGHTING. WE URGE THAT OFFICIAL USG AGENCIES TREAT REPORTS OF WHAT IS GOING ON BETWEEN THE AFAR AND ETHIOPIAN REGULARS WITH GREAT CAUTION, AS HARD FACTS ARE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO COME BY. THE FRENCH BELIEVE THE FIGURE SHOULD BE APPROXIMATELY 150.

C) WE DO HAVE IT FROM FAIRLY RELIABLE SOURCES THAT BAHTI (EAST OF DESSIE) HAS RECEIVED A SIZABLE NUMBER OF AMHARA REFUGEES FROM THE LOWER AWASH. WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT "MANY" REFUGEES ARE CROWDING HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION CAMPS NEAR THE ASSAB ROAD SEEKING SHELTER AND PROTECTION.

D) WE HAVE HEARD THAT TROOPS HAVE BEEN SENT TO DUBTI AND GOWANI AND KNOW FROM AN AMERICAN SOURCE THAT THE LATTER IS QUIET. OTHER REPORTS DO, HOWEVER, SPEAK OF CLASHES BETWEEN GOWANI AND ASSAITA, INTER ALIA AT A LOCALITY CALLED MULEH.

E) AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE UPPER AWASH REPORTEDLY CONTINUES NORMAL.

F) WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE RAILWAY IS OPERATING ROUTINELY BETWEEN ADDIS AND DJIBOUTI. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE REPORTS WHICH SEEM WELL-SOURCED THAT THE AFAR HAVE ATTEMPTED TO INTERFERE WITH RAILWAY TRAFFIC, WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO SUBSTANTIATE THEM TO DATE.

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